

# California M E D I C I N E

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## EDITORIALS

### Physical Therapy

In recent years the California Medical Association has aligned itself with the graduates of approved colleges of physical therapy in an attempt to establish a system of registration for graduates who confine their activities to work carried out under the supervision and direction of physicians. During this same time another group has been working for legislation which would set up a state licensing board for those who would practice various forms of physical therapy on the public at large under no professional supervision.

In the current session of the Legislature these two movements have clashed head-on.

In order to prepare itself for this collision the Legislative Committee of the Association started gathering evidence early in 1950. It was primarily concerned with the training that the unsupervised physical therapists received, the manner in which they practiced and the ethical standards, if any, which they maintained. The answers were secured and have been presented to the Legislature.

An employee of the Association was sent to a "physical therapy school" claimed by the other group to be "outstanding"—a three-room establishment above a Berkeley liquor store. There, for six months—and a fee of \$300—he studied "physical therapy." His findings were given to the Legislature in a 28-page affidavit, complete with photographic evidence of examination papers, diploma, etc. In brief, his conclusions may be summarized about as follows:

1. Any student who paid the \$300 tuition was assured of graduation.
2. Examinations were a farce; when he, intentionally or otherwise, missed examination questions, the correct answers were written in by the instructor and a grade of 100 per cent given him.
3. Special emphasis was laid on the technique of administering colonics; the instructor was a woman who claimed to have started in this field twelve years ago, her first patient being her ailing husband. She later admitted that the patient had died after two years.
4. Students of the school were instructed in how to build up a practice by starting in on neurotics, arthritics and others in home visits in evening hours; this start, they were told, would permit them to hold down a regular job and gradually build a large enough clientele to warrant setting up a "physical therapy" establishment.
5. Graduates of the school were eligible for membership—for an additional \$33—in the statewide organization seeking a licensing board. This organization, presumably for want of funds, has permitted its bulletin to be subsidized by equipment manufacturers and others who would teach the members how to "get on easy street."
6. The climax-capper was eligibility of organization members to take a course—\$200 tuition plus \$5 for "student notes"—in "thalamotherapy," a system for treating cancer and other diseases by having the patient wear goggles in which different-colored glass lenses (with no optical qualities) were inserted. This two-day course was taught by a chiropractor who claimed unusual success in "bloodless

surgery" and was sponsored by a former president of the statewide organization.

That is only a part of the story but probably enough to give an idea as to the professional and ethical standards of this self-named group of "physical therapists." The legislative committee which heard the two opposing bills voted unerringly in favor of the C.M.A.-sponsored measure. Within a week the Assembly confirmed the committee's findings by a favorable vote of 61 to 5 for the bill.

At this writing the measure has not come before the State Senate. However, unless there is a startling reversal, favorable Senate action may be anticipated. If this occurs and is followed by Governor Warren's signature, the practice of physical therapy will be classified under a registration system which will

separate the well-trained physical therapists from the practitioners who want to open offices and practice on the public without diagnosis or examination.

It is hoped that favorable action on this measure will be gained. Then, and only then, can we count upon the maintenance of high professional standards in a practice which is, and wants to remain, an adjunct to the practice of medicine, under competent medical supervision and instruction. Those who want to open a business establishment and "get on easy street" would be debarred from this legitimate practice as unqualified; there is ample reason to believe that they should be debarred from all practice because of their lack of training, their ignorance of examination or diagnosis and their avidity, in view of their limited knowledge, to treat all comers. This is quackery at its worst.



### **Prescribed Reading**

Under authority of the C.M.A. Council, the Association's office is now issuing a monthly news letter. Under the title *Rx Reading* it aims to bring to the members each month a brief digest of events and happenings which should be of interest to all physicians.

Legislation, economic developments, governmental policies—anything which may affect the physician in his practice—are in the field of this new publication. *Rx Reading* is planned as a brief review of

current events in a readable form to save the time of the busy physician.

Members of the Association are urged to give this news letter a few minutes each month, to pick up the gleanings from a large number of sources on items which have a real meaning for some, if not all, physicians. Suggested news items are always welcome; and criticisms, preferably constructive, will be paid full heed. *Rx Reading* is your publication.

